

Montana Democratic Legislative Leadership

Senator Jon Tester
709 Son Lane, Big Sandy, Montana 59520
406-378-3182 (home)

Representative Dave Wanzenried
903 Sky Drive, Missoula, Montana 59804
406-728-6121 ext. 127 (work)

August 27, 2003

John Hines, Chair, and Members
Governor's Energy Consumer Protection Task Force
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Chairman Hines and Members of the Task Force,

We're writing to urge the Energy Consumer Protection Task Force to do everything possible to immediately assure Montanans that help will be available this winter to assist in paying skyrocketing power bills. We ask that you also address long-term solutions to our state's power cost crisis.

Assuring Montanans now that they'll have help paying their power bills this winter is critical. Assuring Montana homeowners, small businesses and existing and new industries that power will be reliable and affordable in the years to come is essential to move our state forward. We urge you to include discussion of long-term solutions to the state's worsening energy crisis at a future meeting.

We were pleased to see that today's agenda focuses on "Low Income needs, current programs and proposed funding during the 2003-2004 heating season," as well as on energy efficiency.


With that in mind, we ask that you do what you can to:

- Persuade Governor Martz to use some of the \$73 million in federal aid money to help low-income Montanans and senior citizens pay their power bills this winter.
- Support legislation to make the Universal Systems Benefits program permanent.

In closing, we again stress that the Governor has the authority right now to invest some of the federal aid money in programs that assist Montanans in paying their power bills. Please add the voice of the Energy Consumer Protection Task Force in calling on the Governor to do what's right by allocating some of the federal money now for low-income energy assistance. Senior citizens and low-income Montanans must be assured they will be able to heat their homes this winter.

Sincerely yours,


Sen. Jon Tester
Senate Democratic Leader


Rep. Dave Wanzenried
House Democratic Leader